

CCC INTERVIEW WITH GLENN L. BRITT

Date: March 6, 2002

Location: Colfax, Iowa

DNR: Where was your hometown?

Glenn: Colfax.

DNR: How old were you when you joined the CCC's?

Glenn: 17.

DNR: What were you doing before you joined the CCC's?

Glenn: I was in the NYA and washing dishes. They kicked me out of the NYA because I was making too much money washing dishes.

DNR: Why did you join the CCC's?

Glenn: My folks needed the money.

DNR: What camps were you assigned too?

Glenn: I went to Ames. U.S. Forestry Service.

DNR: When did you go in?

Glenn: '39. I went in as soon as I could. I'll be 80 in April.

DNR: How long were you in there?

Glenn: Not quite two years.

DNR: What kind of clothing did you get?

Glenn: I got new clothing. I got a new pair of boots. All new clothes.

DNR: What about toiletries?

Glenn: I don't remember.

DNR: Did you take any personal items up there?

Glenn: Just the clothes on me.

DNR: Was there anything you couldn't take with you?

Glenn: I don't recall.

DNR: How did they assign the barracks?

Glenn: They said just go there, you go here.

DNR: Were they wooden barracks?

Glenn: Yes. They were painted white. The floors shined. Everybody's shoes were lined up under the bed.

DNR: Who gave you the pillows and blankets?

Glenn: Army issued. We had two stoves, and two fire buckets filled with water behind each one. It was just like being in the army. The stoves burned coal. The latrine was outside. The latrine

DNR: Who were your bunk mates?

Glenn: Dewey Roberts, and Mr. Seymour both native Americans. Leo Thurman from Newton. We ran around together when we were kids. Neal Anderson, Dennis, were in different barracks. Leonard Bettis, Marvin Yoakum from Jasper County.

DNR: How did you guys get along?

Glenn: Great. I think the C's taught you to get a long with people and take orders.

DNR: How was the food?

Glenn: Good. We had a good cook.

DNR: Who did the cooking?

Glenn: A CCC guy.

DNR: Did CCC guys help in the kitchen?

Glenn: Yes. Everybody was assigned KP. At the end of the day, they would check the plates and pans for grease. If they weren't clean then you would do them over again. When we washed our clothes and hung them up on the clothesline, you had to watch them so they wouldn't get stolen. We tried to wash them at home. But there was someone in camp who offered to wash our clothes for twenty to twenty-five cents a load. We would hitchhike down the road to go home to wash clothes.

DNR: What were the holiday meals like?

Glenn: We got turkey. There were special meals.

DNR: When was payday?

Glenn: Once a month. I got \$8. \$22 went home. I would go to movies, get my toothpaste, pop, candy bars. Bus fare to the town was a nickel.

DNR: Were you off on the weekends?

Glenn: Yes.

DNR: Were there any sports activities?

Glenn: Yes. Touch football. No baseball or softball.

DNR: Was there boxing?

Glenn: We had a bantam boxer, whose name was Frankie Perry. He was from Perry, Iowa.

DNR: Did you play any sports?

Glenn: Just pool.

DNR: Did you have any personal conflicts in the camp?

Glenn: Not really. Every once in a while. The guys were really good at picking locks on the footlockers. Short sheeting went on. Also, they would put cereal in my bed.

DNR: If problems took place among the men in the camp, how would that get resolved?

Glenn: Well, not really. I have seen fist fights.

DNR: If someone got in trouble, breaking rules, what would happen?

Glenn: KP duty or latrine duty. If the bed wasn't made right you would get KP.

DNR: Did you have the quarter test?

Glenn: Yes. In the army it was the same way.

DNR: Was there educational or vocational training?

Glenn: I took welding one time. They had a nursery for trees and lumber.

DNR: Do you remember who your teacher was?

Glenn: No. But I learned how to drive trucks.

DNR: Were the classes at camp?

Glenn: Yes. But one time they took us for a truck driving test in Ames at Ames College.

DNR: Did you use any of these skills when you left the CCC's?

Glenn: Yes.

DNR: What were the projects your camp was involved in?

Glenn: State Nursery.

DNR: Where was your camp located?

Glenn: West of College Town on Highway 30. They would load us on covered trucks to the nursery. Anytime we crossed a railroad track, someone would get out and motion the truck across. The trucks didn't have heaters. You'd face the sun and get your feet up on the dash.

DNR: What were your duties in the camp?

Glenn: I would fire the stoves in the barracks. I would fire the kitchen stove as well.

DNR: Did you ever work in the nursery?

Glenn: Pulling weeds. When I was firing the stoves, my buddies would make sandwiches to eat. Or I would make them and bring them over.

DNR: What was Ame's main project?

Glenn: Growing trees for wind breaks.

DNR: Who taught you to run the grader?

Glenn: I did. It had 16 or 17 levers. I figured it out myself. I would grade the snow. I pulled it with the CAT. We build the road there running up to the river up a big hill. We dug the ditches along the side of the road.

DNR: How did you get along with everyone?

Glenn: Okay.

DNR: How did you get your work assignments?

Glenn: Some boss would give it to you. But everyday they checked the trucks. I hauled gravel, and dirt. I hauled mulch from a lake to a nursery. We dug it out during the winter. We would get leaves from the college and carry it on my truck. On the sidewalk, there were college dorms. The college experimented with apples. They would be real sweet. CCC boys were caught stealing apples. They tried to find them in the barracks. Some civilian called and complained.

DNR: Who were the leaders on the site where you were working?

Glenn: Bushock was the captain.

DNR: What type of equipment did you use?

Glenn: Truck, grader. I sanded the floor of the barracks. I used a sander. Once they had to build a gas tank in the ground. Me and Bill Anderson dug the hole. Bill Anderson was from Newton. But he's dead now. I had contact with him over the years. Marvin Yoakum worked for Right Tree Company. Bill Anderson was a boss for carpenter work.

DNR: How did the city kids and the country kids get along at the camp?

Glenn: No.

DNR: Were there any minorities in the camp?

Glenn: Two Indians from Tamer.

DNR: How were they treated by their bosses?

Glenn: The same.

DNR: Did you learn any special skills?

Glenn: Truck driving. It helped me in the army driving the "Red Ball" in France.

DNR: Were there any injuries to you or someone else?

Glenn: Sunburn.

DNR: How was that taken care of?

Glenn: We had a doctor in camp. If you couldn't go to the bathroom then they gave you the 'brown bomber.'

DNR: Any diseases in camp?

Glenn: Some people would get the crabs.

DNR: Was their venereal disease?

Glenn: No.

DNR: Was there a rodent or insect problem?

Glenn: No.

DNR: Did you do any work for the community?

Glenn: No.

DNR: Did you have any contacts with the community?

Glenn: I might meet a girl.

DNR: Were there any Masonic organizations in the camp?

Glenn: I don't remember.

DNR: Did you have any contacts with the girls in town?

Glenn: Sometimes women on Sundays would come to camp. They would announce it over the loudspeaker.

DNR: Was there any problems with the college guys and the CCC guys?

Glenn: The college guys thought they were better than us.

DNR: How do you think the community thought about the CCC camp?

Glenn: I don't know.

DNR: Do you have a memorable experience?

Glenn: Making sandwiches for guys at midnight or letting them make their own. Once I was on guard duty, I would fire up the stove and jump into bed.

DNR: Did you have any odd experiences?

Glenn: If you brought a candy bar, everybody would want a bite of it. We would line up and collect cigarette butts.

DNR: What do you think was your biggest accomplishment?

Glenn: Getting along with people. Learning to take orders. Getting money to my folks.

DNR: How do you think your life was changed by enrolling in the CCC's?

Glenn: I came out healthy. I went in a kid and came out a man. It did a lot of good. You learned to be outgoing.

DNR: What did you do after you left the CCC's?

Glenn: I went to Illinois to work for Rock Island. I worked in the lumber yard. I worked for a textile factory making shell containers for a couple of years. Then the war broke out. I was drafted from Des Moines. I got drafted into the infantry. I got wounded in France and was shot through the shoulder. It was shrapnel. They were

shooting the trees. The First Sergeant was six foot seven inches. They blew the back of his leg off. He wouldn't let the medics work on him until they touched me. I was bleeding from the mouth and ears. It was a concussion. The shrapnel went right through me. It was November 18th. There was snow on the ground. They laid me on the hood of the jeep and took me off the hill. I can't touch the top of my head with it. I was in the army three years. I spent nine months in the hospital. I spent 24 days on the front lines. I was in a mortar section. You might live only two or three minutes on the front line. People don't believe that. But when you're on the front line that's who there after. The machine gunners and mortars. You can hear the mortar go off.

After the service I drove a truck. Then I did 30 years at Maytag. I retired in 1980. I got a hobby collecting old coal mining tools. I have a smoothing iron collection. The one you set on a stove.

DNR: Did you sign up in Newton for the CCC camp?

Glenn: Yeah.

DNR: How would you get home?

Glenn: I would hitchhike.

DNR: How old are you?

Glenn: I'm 80.